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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 005397

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQIS IN JORDAN REACT POSITIVELY TO HANDOVER, BUT NOT READY TO GO HOME YET

REF: AMMAN 5088

Classified By: DCM David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Iraqi contacts in Jordan see the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraq Interim Government (IIG) as a positive step toward a better Iraq. They expect that the violence will continue in coming months, but subside as the IIG asserts its authority. These contacts maintain that security is the biggest issue in Iraq, and that having trained police and military forces is crucial to restoring stability. However, these Iraqis are convinced that the long-term keys are reconstruction and increased job opportunities. They do not plan on returning any time soon, citing insecurity. End Summary.

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REACTION TO THE TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY  
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[1](#)2. (C) Our Iraqi contacts reacted positively--but with surprise--to the June 28 transfer of sovereignty. The Iraqi Charge in Amman, Ma'an Barakat, said that he and the entire staff at the Mission were surprised and very pleased with the news. (Comment: On the separate issue of rumored new visa requirements, Barakat has not yet received any communication from the Iraq MFA providing visa instructions--see reftel.) Issam Chalabi, Iraqi businessman in Jordan and former Iraq Oil Minister, said that he was not surprised that the transfer occurred earlier than June 30 but was happy nonetheless. Iraqi businessman Amin Zubeidi said it was a great move to surprise the insurgents. He also cited the NATO agreement in principle to train Iraqi forces as important to establishing IIG credibility.

[1](#)3. (C) Despite their positive feelings about the transfer of sovereignty, these Iraqis say that they do not have any plans to visit Iraq soon. They maintain that wealthy Iraqis are targeted for kidnapping and theft of property, and this fear is a major influence on any decision to risk travel into Iraq. They suggest that the best way to help calm the security situation is for Iraqi police and NIA forces to coordinate efforts with the multi-national forces. While expecting continued attacks, these contacts were hopeful that the situation would improve more as job opportunities increase and tangible results in the reconstruction process are felt.

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SOVEREIGNTY OR ELECTIONS: WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT?  
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[1](#)4. (C) In recent conversations with our Iraqi contacts, there has been a consensus that sovereignty and a strong Iraqi government are more important than free elections at this time. Most of our contacts do not believe that the planned January 2005 elections can be implemented properly. Iraqis, they claim, do not understand the meaning of democracy. They believe it is more important to establish the credibility and authority of the IIG so that it can stem the violence.

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IIG CREDIBILITY; THESE ARE GOOD GUYS  
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[1](#)5. (C) Reaction to IIG leaders from our contacts has been favorable. Our Iraqi contacts tend to characterize the IIG leadership as a "bunch of good guys", and they repeatedly say it was wise to involve the U.N. in the selection process. Our secular, business-oriented contacts, are happy that the leadership is not composed of religious leaders. The current leadership, they feel, is well-placed to begin the process of restoring stability in Iraq and paving the way towards a democratically-elected government. A group of Iraqi students who are participating in a U.S. exchange program spoke favorably of the new leaders as being well-known inside Iraq, in comparison to the unknown transition figures who preceded them.

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COMMENT  
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[1](#)6. (C) Our contacts favorably viewed the coalition's efforts

to install a new government. However, they are quick to criticize the coalition for poor security and bad unemployment in Iraq.

17. (U) AMEMBASSY Baghdad minimize considered.

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